



Heat and Cold Emergencies

Frostbite

Frostbite is the freezing of the deep tissues from long periods of exposure to the cold and always results in tissue damage. With pets, the most common areas affected are the parts of the body with the least amount of hair (ear tips, scrotum, feet and teats). Frostbite is usually followed up with hypothermia.

Signs and Symptoms

- The skin starts to scale
- Skin feels leathery
- There is a whitened, waxy appearance to the tissues
- Severe pain

First Aid

- Take the pet indoors, into a warm vehicle etc.
- Handle the pet very carefully and warm them very slowly
- Wrap the pet in a blanket to keep it warm (put a blanket in the dryer for a few seconds)
- Immerse the foot or tail in warm water until the tissues look red
- If the frost bitten area been thawed and re-frozen, re-warm the area at room temperature (20° C)
- If you are using warm water, the temperature should be 42-44°C

Note: warming frozen body parts is a very painful process and is best done under sedation by your veterinarian.

DO NOT apply snow to the frost bitten area

DO NOT rub the frost bitten area

DO NOT burst/break any blisters that form (blisters protect the injury from infection)

Hypothermia

Hypothermia results from the body's core dropping below 35°C (taken rectally). Pets that are most often affected by hypothermia are those that lose body heat quickly including, small dogs, short hair breeds, older pets, young puppies and kittens.

Signs and Symptoms

- Shivering
- Muscles are stiff
- Feel cold to the touch
- Pulse, respirations and body temperature are very low
- Pupils are fixed and dilated
- Extremities are frozen
- Pet is extremely lethargic (no energy, wants to sleep)
- Unconscious sets in and eventually death if untreated

First Aid

- Prevent any further heat loss by moving the pet to a warm shelter, vehicle etc.
- Start to warm the pet by using warm blankets, towels, heating pad on low, a luke-warm hot water bottle etc. Put towels and blankets in the dryer for a few minutes so they are warm, but not hot.
- Immerse the frozen parts (feet or tail) in warm water 39-40°C, only if there is no access to a veterinarian.
- Treat the pet for shock (keep him/her quiet)
- Only if you pet is conscious, give a warm water sugar mixture to drink (this will help to rebuild energy)
- Take your pet to the vet As Soon As Possible

Note: The warming should be done by a vet, with the pet under sedation as this is an extremely painful process.

Heat Stroke and Hyperthermia

Heat Stroke and Hyperthermia results when the animal cannot lower its body temperature when they have been exposed to, too much heat, humidity or sunlight. Animals cool themselves by breathing in cool air and exhaling warm air; this also helps to control their body temperature. If the temperature is 39°C or higher, the animal cannot cool itself fast enough with normal respirations (breathing). Animals cool themselves by panting and through the bottom of their feet.

This is a life threatening emergency and requires immediate Veterinary Care

Causes

- Confined in an enclosed over heated area or space (vehicle or garage)
- Excessive exercise on hot days (it is best to exercise in the early morning or late evenings)
- No fresh drinking water is available
- High humidity with no ventilation
- Clipping! The coat of a long haired dogs does not help prevent heat stroke. It may increase the chances of hyperthermia happening since the long coat protects the animal in the winter from the cold and summer from the heat. Clipped coats can also cause the dog's skin to sun burn.

This is a life threatening emergency and requires immediate Veterinary Care. If you think your pet may have Heat Stroke, take them to the vet right away.